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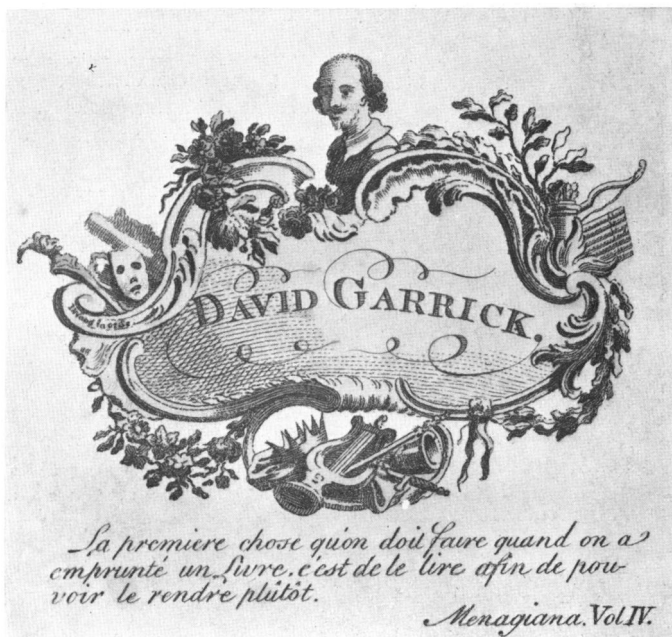
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ART AND PROGRESS

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DAVID GARRICK'S BOOK-PLATE

I. WOOD. ENGRAVER

BOOK-PLATES

NOTES ON AN EXHIBITION HELD IN DETROIT

BY HELEN PLUMB

TO pass in review the exhibition of "Book Plates: Ancient and Modern," which was held during March by the Society of Arts and Crafts of Detroit, is to live again those wonderful days when the earliest printed books were still a novelty. For from the time that the printing press gave to the world not two or three, but a hundred or more, copies of a particular work, a real neces-

sity arose for the different owners to distinguish their respective copies of a book. The *Ex libris* is the mature act of book preservation against the professional book-borrower, who undoubtedly would have gladly retained a manuscript copy lent him by an unsuspecting friend, could he have done so without his crime being detected, and who doubtless saw in the multitude of copies a greater



BOOK-PLATE OF HENRIETTA, COUNTESS OF OXFORD

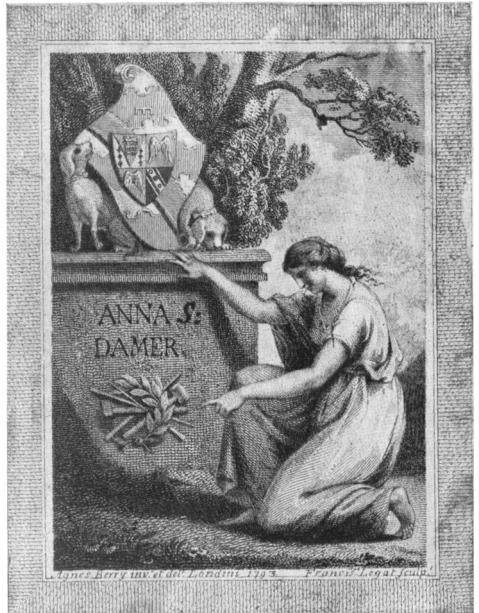
opportunity of carrying out his nefarious designs. Indeed, next to an umbrella, there is no loan of personal property concerning the appropriation of which such lax ideas of morality are current as a book; and so to engrave on one's *Ex libris* some fulmination against the borrower is a virtuous proceeding revealing, withal, often an intimate glimpse of the owner's personality.

Though to many people book-plates are unconsidered trifles—merely one of the “lesser arts”—they possess an artistic and general interest which is heightened the more one studies them. The main reasons for which a book-plate becomes interesting are three: it bears an early date or infers an early date from its workmanship; it recalls an owner who was some well-known person in the past; it is beautiful as a work of art; respectively the antiquarian, historical and artistic aspect of an *Ex libris*.

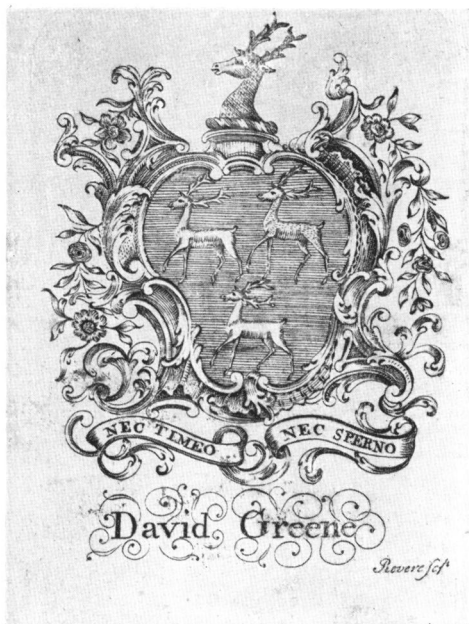
In this notable exhibition of about 5,000 prints, through the generosity of

private collectors and leading designers of book-plates, it was possible to illustrate chronologically, almost without a break, the complete history of the book-plate—and of the art at full length. Specimens ranged from simple name-plates, often of high interest; such, for example, as those of William Hazlett, Grote, Gibbon, Daniel Webster and others loaned by Mr. T. Henry Foster of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to highly elaborate engraved pictures such as “Anna Damer’s” book-plate. Exceptional opportunity was thus given to observe evolution of styles—if not development of skill—from the early Armorial, the Jacobean, allegorical, Chippendale, landscape, the old pictorial of Europe in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries down to the American Colonial and from 1830—the beginning of “modern” book-plate art—to present-day productions.

With book-plates as in other lines of collecting, rarity is a desirable feature in deciding values; a second prominent element is the signature of the engraver of the plate. No more striking example



BOOK-PLATE OF ANNA DAMER
DESIGNED BY AGNES BERRY ENGRAVED BY LEGAT

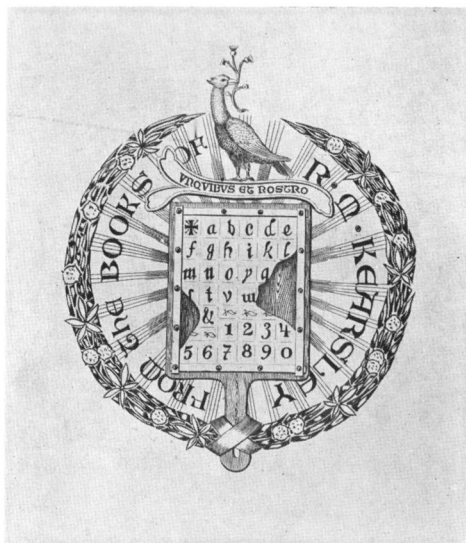


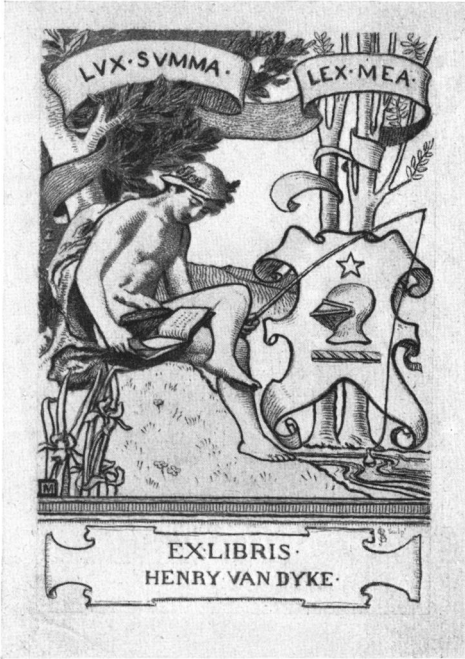
BOOK-PLATE ENGRAVED BY PAUL REVERE

of both items could be furnished than George Vertue's charming piece of work engraved for Henrietta, Countess of Oxford, also peculiarly valuable as showing the precise point of transition between the Jacobean and the allegorical styles—an allegory within an allegory—the living allegoric figure springing from the dead carved image of the Jacobean frame. As book-plates free from anything armorial were rare in England at that date—1730—it is probable the idea was Lady Oxford's own. In marked contrast to this plate is that of Anna Damer, the noted sculptress—"pet of Horace Walpole" and friend of Napoleon and Josephine. It was of the pictorial type, and in elegance of design and beauty of execution far surpassed any ladies' book-plate of the day. Her friend, Miss Agnes Berry, Walpole's "Sweet Saint Agnes," designed the plate, which represents a kneeling figure pointing to a newly-cut inscription on a block of stone, etc. It was engraved by Francis Legat and dated 1793. Both of these plates are owned by Mrs. Walter S. Russel of Detroit, in whose collection are also fine examples of Anning Bell,

Walter Crane, a rare William Blake and a Gallaudet, besides a number of celebrities' plates.

David Garrick's plate is another of peculiar interest; the reputation of the Garrick library is well known, and this library label bears distinguishing marks of its owner's taste and profession. Faintly Chippendale in style, it is garnished with festoons of flowers, a mask of Punchinello, Pan-pipes and other theatrical "properties," the bust of Shakespeare crowning the whole. Below is the motto later copied on many *Ex libris*—"*La première chose qu'on doit faire quand on a emprunté un Livre, c'est de le lire afin de pouvoir le rendre plutôt.*" This plate is signed I. Wood and is owned by Miss Margaret Kearsley of Detroit, one of the greatest collectors of *Ex libris* in America, of whom truly the saying is apt, "whatever an American collects is collected well." From her rich stores were drawn many of the rarest prints shown—notably the signed and dated Paul Revere, an extremely valuable impression, and fine examples of Bartolozzi, Maverick, Doolittle, Gallaudet, etc. A number of good armorial plates, chiefly Canadian, were lent by Mr. Walter Conway Prescott of Newton

BOOK-PLATE OF MARGARET KEARSLY
DESIGNED AND ENGRAVED BY HERMAN HAGER



BOOK-PLATE OF DR. HENRY VAN DYKE

Center, Mass., another connoisseur of this delicate art, who is not keeping to himself the results of his labors. In both his and Miss Kearsley's collections may be found some of the rare and interesting book-plates from English parish libraries and institutions which were of the same order as the early New England circulating libraries. In these days when the enthusiasm for and erection of fine libraries is so great, it is curious to be reminded of the long-forgotten efforts of our ancestors to civilize their neighbors by the use of books. In most of these "Minerva" appears, surrounded by clouds, in company with an American Indian or Parnassian celebrities carrying implements of the Arts and Sciences—truly allegory *ram-pant!*

It is almost thrilling merely to hold in one's hand such book-plates as these and others belonging to celebrities of the past—Charles Dickens, Joseph Jefferson, Henry Irving, Harrison Gray Otis and many men who did not merely stamp their names upon the labels of their libraries, but upon the pages of history.

To the decay of interest in heraldry—a science not in vogue with us—is due the multiplicity of modern book-plates suggesting the vocation or hobby of the owner, often when the idea is genuine and artistically expressed, of great charm. Indeed, from 1830, from which dates generally the "modern" plates, few examples are seen of any "school" or "style" distinct as were the ancient examples. This has sometimes unfortunately given rise to the wildest eccentricities of "fancy" and "personal" plates—"emblematic," "symbolic" or "theoretic," in which the emblem or symbol or theory is far too mystical for any ordinary comprehension. To this category belong many of the German book-plates; though eccentric, they are not more so than the art of that nation today. Mr. Prescott contributed many excellent examples from great German bibliophiles, and Mr. Henry M. Utley, librarian of the Detroit Public Library, also added to this division.

It would be difficult to overestimate the scope of the modern examples, whether approached from the angle of vision of artist, designer, engraver, or from the profession of book-plate owners—actors, authors, lawyers, connoisseurs, celebrities



BOOK-PLATE DESIGNED BY ALEXANDRINE MCEWEN



BOOK-PLATE DESIGNED AND ENGRAVED
ON WOOD BY GEORGE W. PLANK

in all lines of endeavor, notorieties even, so that the immense popularity of the exhibition may be explained by the comment of one visitor: "It's just like reading 'Who's Who' in the world to read over the names!" But to the book-lover, the student and the artist the charm of the display lies deeper.

One finds, as always, in the work of the late E. D. French, of whose plates over 200 were shown, extraordinary taste and esthetic distinction, and evidence of perfect command of his medium. J. Winfred Spenceley, another artist whose recent death is regretted, was seen at his best in some of the intimate library interiors he knew so well how to portray. While differing from his brother's style, there is yet a peculiarly personal flavor in all of Frederick Spenceley's plates. It was he, by the way, who designed the graceful plates for President Taft and W. C. Prescott. Naively sympathetic are the children's book-plates of Mr. Wilbur Macy Storie, whose pre-eminence in this field has induced followers—among them, Helen Fox Trowbridge with silhouettes of nursery rhymes. More pictorial is the work of Valentine Kirby and Jay Chambers. Frances Delehanty's designs show true medieval feeling. W. Edgar Fisher adds to the charm of his exquisite drawing hand illumination. Claude Bragdon, the

architect, excels in neat draughtmanship and apt characterization. Singularly fine, too, is Edmund Garrett's work; J. Montford Smith and Bertram Goodhue show beautifully executed ecclesiastical plates. The set designed by Mr. Goodhue for Harvard University is famous, as is that of Trinity Parish, Boston. In so brief a survey it is impossible to speak more in detail. Yet mention should be made of the excellent pupils' work by Marshall Fry's students, woodcuts in the "Gordon Craig" style, often touched happily with color; Annie Blakeslee Hooper, Frank Chouteau Brown, Bruce Rogers, and others. Miss Kearsley's own plate was designed and engraved by a local Detroit artist. Herman Hager, J. Edward Liggett and George True are also Detroit designers, but the chief place is held by Miss Alexandrine McEwen, an author as well as an artist, who



BOOK-PLATE OF MARY ANDERSON

has yet found time to design a considerable number of really interesting and distinctive marks of ownership showing originality of style. In the too-little-used art of wood-engraving are the delightful book-plates of Mr. George W. Plank, one of which is reproduced.

The hearty co-operation of yet another collector who is also a designer should be noted. Mr. Sheldon Cheney, of the California Book-Plate Society, sent many choice plates, among them a number by Albertine Randall Wheelan. Thanks are due also to Mr. T. Henry Foster, whose contribution, chiefly of works by Hollier, Sherbon, Eve and other English artists, fully rounded out a truly representative exhibition.

A word as to the personal plates, or those suggestions of the owner's tastes or vocation. J. Pierpont Morgan's book-plate is a small leather label, with his arms and monogram stamped in gold, one of the few instances of the use of leather for a book-plate, and, of course, the Morgan library is world-famous. Three noted anglers, of otherwise widely separate tastes, all have book-plates denoting this hobby—Henry A. Sherwin,

Dr. Henry van Dyke and John G. Heck-scher, on whose plate is a leaping salmon surmounting a copy of the "Compleat Angler" of 1653, the most valuable then known of "Waltonia." Henry E. Abbey's plate for Brander Matthews, showing an Indian examining a tragic mask, and encircled by a line from Molière, "*Que pensez-vous de cette Comedie*," is happily indicative of the author's taste. In Mary Anderson's book-plate, designed by the engraver, S. Hollier—and a charming modern pictorial plate—we have the actress' love of home expressed. And so one might multiply instances which would all go to show that it is just this significant, historical, or rather telltale quality of book-plates which primarily makes them full of interest which they seldom lack, but which in the fulfilment of their purpose is not essential. Though, to be sure, in the matter of personal particulars, how communicative are some people on their book-plates! All of which goes to show that book-plate collecting is a pursuit the delights of which are discernable chiefly to those who bring capacity for such pleasures.

ART MATTERS IN FRANCE

BY WALTER McEWEN

"**A**H! *Que c'est beau!*" This pronounced in a soft voice filled with reverence, almost awe, would suggest we were contemplating one of the world's masterpieces; or at least something of such extraordinary beauty that one only spoke in whispers, if daring to speak at all.

Strange as it may seem, we were standing in a little room not many steps from the Grands Boulevards; on easels before us were three framed canvases—a nude figure, a head and a still life. I will not attempt a description of any of these canvases; nothing in the way of a de-

scription would seem to the reader in the least serious. I will say they were by a man much talked of among the younger men at present, were good examples of his work and said to be very valuable.

No, a description is absolutely impossible. One's wildest dream of the incompetent was here realized. Drawing, color, good taste, and in fact everything, as it is understood from the pictures of the masters, was lacking. If a child were given brush and canvas the result might be similar. We have all seen something of the kind at the yearly exhibition of the *Independants* and